# TOKYO DISNEYLAND

## Successor to a Great Tradition

Tokyo Disneyland®

by Bill Kallay

Walt Disney started a new revolution in the amusement park industry when he opened Disneyland. With Disneyland, he developed a concept called the "theme park," which encouraged others to conceive their own Magic Kingdoms. Many failed. Some succeeded, such as the creator of Six Flags Over Texas.

Sixteen years after the opening of Disneyland, Walt's brother Roy carried on the task of building a vacation kingdom in Florida. That too, succeeded. Walt Disney World, which sits on a land mass of 28,000 acres, has become the foremost tourist attraction in the world. Both parks have brought an incredible amount of income to the once sleepy towns they reside in.

Before 1983, a sleepy town in Japan, Urayasu, wasn't considered to be more than another suburb to Tokyo. But with the wave of a Disney wand and the money from a Japanese company, Urayasu became the talk of Japan. Since April 15, 1983, more than 10 million guests have passed through the magical gates of Tokyo Disneyland. Japanese families now are able to shake Mickey Mouse's hand or hug Minnie.

*A quintet of Japanese musicians plan turn of the century music from America. (copyright Walt Disney Productions)*

Tokyo Disneyland sits on a huge 600 acre landfill, amidst the bustling port of Tokyo Bay. The piece of land was designated in the 1960's as a recreational area to satisfy the growing entertainment needs of the Tokyo metropolitan region. The Japanese Chiba Prefectoral Govt. was convinced that a new company that was building the landfill, Oriental Land Company, could design the recreational area. By the early 1970's Walt Disney Productions began thinking about a new theme park somewhere overseas. Oriental Land Company prompted Disney's interest and both parties began negotiations.

After agreements were reached in December of 1974, researchers surveyed the Tokyo area for marketing, visitor potential and Disney popularity. It was then decided that a theme park could be built in the quiet town of Urayasu. Over a period from April 1979 to December 1980, the last plans were made. Tokyo Disneyland, as WED Imagineers said, would include the best of the American theme parks. It also would have attractions designed just for the new park, such as an Audio-Animatronics presentation on Japanese history.

Construction began in April of 1981 and finished in 1983. The final cost of the park: $650 million! The project was paid for entirely by the Oriental Land Company and other investors. Walt Disney Productions didn't pay anything. It simply designed the park, trained new employees, manufactured rides, and would stay on with the project for further guidance.

The Magic Kingdom opened on a cold and rainy day in April. To hold back extreme crowds, tickets had to be bought in advance. This was done, for the openings of Disneyland and Walt Disney World proved to be hassles. At one point during the first month of WDW's operation, the park got so crowded that thousands of people were turned back and sent home! But Tokyo's grand opening was smooth and within the first few weeks, it became a national landmark. The most popular items to sell incredibly fast were the beloved Mickey Mouse Ears.

The park itself lies on 114 acres of landfill. It is larger than the American parks, but it has the smallest parking lot. The Japanese rely on mass transportation. Future plans call for a major railway company (partner in the theme park) to construct a bullet train, which would come to the main entrance of the park. So much for building a monorail in Tomorrowland!

One of the most impressive structures in the park is the huge glass covering at World Bazaar, Japan's version of Main Street. This girder and glass piece was built to suit year-round operation because of Japan's weather. It was designed so that it wouldn't look repulsive. The covering takes on a Victorian style look to match the Bazaar.

Other details were also taken into consideration. The most distinct are the street signs, which are all in English. Disney though it would be nice for Japanese visitors to feel like they were in an American park. The American feeling went as far as the food, too. Not a single Japanese food item can be found.

The first theme land people enter is World Bazaar, a recreation of imaginary Middle America. Although it looks like Main Street U.S.A., the shops carry a different variety of gifts. There is a clock shop and jewelry store, but most of the gifts are from all parts of the world. The guests are able to walk down a clutter-free street, because the antique autos and fire engines drive around the Plaza. Even though the Bazaar is covered by a glass structure, there are still small courtyards, sidewalks and friendly balloon venders, just like in America.

Coming from the shelter of World Bazaar, one is struck by the awesome beauty of Cinderella Castle. The Castle is a mixture of European architecture and Disney "imagineering." She stands 171 feet (51 meters) above the park. On clear days, she can be seen from downtown Tokyo. Under its shadows lies the Plaza, the decision point into the four other realms.

The first adventure people encounter heading northeast is Adventureland. It has always been a place of romantic pleasure and intrigue. The largest attraction, and by far the most popular in the land is the Pirates of the Caribbean. As many know, passengers embark on a voyage through grottos, rooms of gold, and finally the sacking of a seaport. WED Imagineers used more advanced Audio-Animatronics for this and all of the main attractions.

Moving along, one passes the Crystal Palace, a beautiful Victorian restaurant. The next attractions are the Jungle Cruise and Western River Railroad. The Jungle Cruise is an old Disney medium, combining a boat ride and animals. "Victims" ride through the rivers of the world, passing scenes of lions and tigers. Since Japan's weather consists of much rain, heaters were installed and special plants were selected.

*TOKYO DISNEYLAND'S most popular attraction is Space Mountain. (copyright Walt Disney Productions)*

Instead of steam trains encircling the park, it was decided that they should only travel a short distance. Western River Railroad runs its course past the River of America, where old time boats sail. Included on the train journey is the Primeval World, a mural-like sight, in which visitors can see dinosaurs.

The next theme land is Japan's version of Frontierland. Of course, it resembles the old west, but the name was changed to Westernland, because Japanese guests are unfamiliar with the frontier concept. The most popular show/attraction is the Country Bear Jamboree. It's a Vaudeville review with singing bears. Americans might find it most amusing to hear the bears sing in Japanese, for the show was designed for them.

The famous Mark Twain Sternwheeler has found a new home in Japan. It makes a voyage around Tom Sawyer Island, a playground for children. Sometimes following it are the Davy Crockett Explorer Canoes, which in some cases might be considered the wettest rides

around. Guests are cordially invited to paddle their way down the river. Many a trip, one might get splashed by another person in front of him.

The most fantastic land of all is Fantasyland. The landmark to encounter is the ominous Haunted Mansion, the home of 999 horribly happy ghosts. Imagineers had a filled day creating new and more spectacular special effects than usual. Unweary visitors climb into their "doom buggies" and embark on an eerie voyage into a seemingly quiet house.

The other scary attractions are Snow White's Adventures and, depending on the children, Pinocchio's Daring Journey. The latter was intended for Tokyo Disneyland's opening. It is one of four new rides especially created for the new park. Daring Journey uses astounding visual effects, such as the Blue Fairy's disappearance. At the end of the ride, she turns into pixie dust right before your very eyes.

It's a Small World traveled to Japan, also. The indoor boat excursion takes guests through rooms of children from around the world, they sing the theme song, which seems to delight everyone who has taken the trip. Other attractions include Dumbo Flying Elephants, Peter Pan's Flight, a journey to Never Land, and attraction for Walt Disney World, Mickey Mouse Revue, and the impressive Cinderella's Golden Carrousel, framed in the arches of the Castle.

A Skyway can take people to Tomorrowland, playground of the future. Dominating the sky is the most popular ride in the entire park, Space Mountain. The cone structure can be seen from downtown Tokyo on clear days. Inside, however, is a dark and fast roller-coaster-type ride. Stars and spaceships are mere streaks as "rockets" pass by them.

In the vicinity of the Mountain are the starjets, guest controlled rockets, and the Grand Circuit Raceway, a freeway of the future. Children have always gotten a "kick" out of this ride. But perhaps the most sophisticated show in the park is Meet the World. This show on Japanese history was primarily designed for Tokyo Disneyland. It revolves around the achievements of the Japanese people and it is a great learning experience for young and old alike. As a Disney standard, Audio-Animatronics are used.

Because of the grand success of Tokyo Disneyland, Walt Disney Productions has been seriously thinking of building a theme park elsewhere. Perhaps in Europe. But those plans are far into the future. As far as designing the park to traditional Disney standards, WED Imagineers have done an impressive job. Walt Disney would have been proud.

"I think what I want Disneyland to be most of all is a happy place - a place where adults and children can experience together some of the wonders of life, of adventure, and I feel better because of it." WALT DISNEY

# *Obituaries*

*Three important amusement park owners died in December and January.*

GEORGE A ROOSE, 89, died December 16 in his home in Perryville, Ohio. Roose had been honorary chairman of the board, president and chief executive office of Cedar Point until his retirement in 1980.

He purchased the G. A. Boeckling Company in 1957 along with a group of investors and later changed the name to Cedar Point. Under his direction Cedar Point became one of America's great amusement parks. Rosse along with his partner, Emile LeGros, are generally credited with the rejuvenating of the park in the 1950's and 1960's making in Sandusky's largest taxpayer.

PATRICK E. DUFFY, 57, died Saturday 5, of a heart attack. He was president and general manager of Idora Amusement Park in Youngstown, Ohio, until its closing last year. The 90-year-old park had been devastated by a fire that destroyed two major attractions last April. The fire was a factor in the decision to close the park. Duffy had worked in the park, of which his father was part owner, almost continuously from the time he was nine years old. One of his first jobs was selling grab bags.

JAMES R. LARK, 60, died Monday January 14. He was the owner and operator of Miracle Strip Amusement Park and Shipwreck Island in Panama City, Florida. Lark had undergone open hear surgery a year ago and had suffered three hear attacks in the past year, each time returning to his work at the park.

Orginally in construction, Lark had pioneered the development of the Panama City Beach area when he built a roller coaster on undeveloped land 23 years ago. He added new attractions every year and watched his venture grow into a full scale amusement park and waterpark.

*Credit February issue of FUN WORLD '85*

## Tokyo Disneyland - A Little Bit of America in Japan

We were tempted to use the headline, "Tokyo Disneyland - A Little Bit of America in Japan," with Bill Kalin's article. However, this would have been editorializing too much and therefore we decided to comment on an American amusement park in Japan here.

From Bill Kalin's article it is obvious that Tokyo Disneyland is an American experience in Japan. Street signs and signs on the buildings are in English. No Japanese food is sold, but instead traditional American amusement park fare.

### COMMENTARY

The Japanese people seem willing, as indicated by a first year attendance of 10 million plus, to accept a carbon copy of Disney's American parks. As a matter of fact keeping this park as Americanized as possible seemed to be a key ingredient in its success. We wonder if corporate sponsors like Fuji Film, Kodansha Publishers, Ltd., Mitsui Bank, Matsushita Electric Industries, Nippon Oil Co. Ltd would have been willing to sponsor attractions in the park if they hadn't been copies from the American Parks.

In contrast when Taft Broadcasting Co. opened Canada's Wonderland near Toronto in 1979 the fact that this park was thought of as a copy of an American amusement park was hotly debated. Canadian nationalism wanted more of a Canadian amusement park. However, there didn't seem to be any debate of this kind when Tokyo Disneyland was announced, during construction or during the opening.

The Japanese love Disneyland and millions of them have visited the park since it opened in 1955. I first became aware of the importance of the Japanese tourist to Disneyland when I was visiting the park, a group of Japanese asked me to take their picture then they lined up in front of Snow White's Castle and unfurled their banner written in Japanese and I took their picture.

Knott's Berry Farm located in nearby Buena Park, California, has also attracted many Japanese visitors over the years. According to one Knott's official they like to see what the real old west really looked like.

Certainly there are hundreds of amusement parks in Japan. One of our subscribers sent us some photographs of Japanese parks and rides taken shortly after the Second World War. The rides were either very old American rides, like the whip or dodgem, or crudely made Japanese rides.

Today there are hundreds of Japanese amusement parks scattered around the islands. These parks feature mostly Japanese manufactured rides with a few of the more popular European rides thrown in.

The average American would probably find Japanese parks and rides too gaudy, but to a society that accepts the heavy use of huge neon signs in business areas, these parks fit right it.

If the Japanese society is willing to accept some things from America it might as well be baseball and Disneyland, because if you thing about it, these are two of our more successful contributions to modern society.

**Charles Jacques Jr. - Editor**